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WHAT WE LOOK FOR IN BUYING HOME FURNISHINGS

A radio talk by Miss Carrie C. Williams, Assistant State Leader, Home Demonstration Work, Ithaca, New York, delivered in the Home Demonstration Hour, September 4, 1935, and broadcast by a network of 47 associated NBC radio stations.

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How delightful it is to buy new furnishings for a home! "Delightful," most of you will say, "but nerve wracking!" "Simple enough" the thoughtless will state, if your purse is well filled!" But twenty-two thousand of the homemakers in New York State do not believe that furniture buying is a simple task either with or without well filled purses, therefore they set about taking the headache out of furniture buying last year through study.

Perhaps I should state that about nine thousand homemakers, studying the repair and refinishing of old furnishings over a period of four or five years, had uncovered the need of studying furniture buying through the intimate knowledge gained of construction processes and kinds of wood and materials used while working. It was amazing to most of us, what could be found inside of many so-called upholstered furnishings. We learned through experience in tearing pieces apart why some practically new furnishings had become unfit for use after only one or a few years wear while other pieces handed down from great-great grandmothers were still in excellent condition, and would be good for many additional years of service after being re-upholstered and refinished.

We learned through hours of patient labor, spent in removing old paint and varnish, that some woods were worth the efforts of refinishing while others were not.

The knowledge regarding quality in materials and workmanship and the greater sense of appreciation of beauty in well designed furnishings which came unsought to all who worked on old furnishings, led to a desire to know more about modern furniture and how to buy it more wisely when furnishing our homes.

Comfort, beauty and durability are characteristics of paramount interest to every buyer of furniture.

If you are furnishing a home on a limited income, or even if you wish to buy only one or two new pieces of furniture, you may be interested in some of the qualities that those of us in New York State who are studying consumer buying have come to look for.

In upholstered pieces there is first the frame to be considered. This, to be durable, we found should be of hard wood such as ash or maple so as to hold tacks and screws firmly. Joints should be closely fitted and doweled or dovetailed. Fitted corner blocks, glued and screwed in place to give strength. Arms were most secure when reinforced where they meet the seat frame.

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Most of these features we could determine by careful examination before purchasing. Frames made of soft woods, unseasoned and put together with nails and cheap glue had not proven so satisfactory. After the furniture was placed in warm rooms with dry heat the moisture left the wood, it shrank, warped and split, the nails and glue would not hold and the furniture became unsightly and useless.

In the best of upholstered pieces we found webbing of good quality placed close together and stretched tightly to form the base to which springs were sewed. Double coil springs placed close together and each spring tied with eight knots had given maximum comfort and durability. Contrasted with this construction, in cheaper upholstered chairs and couches, we found as few as four single coil cone-shaped springs attached to metal strips and held in place only by metal connections and a few stitches taken through the burlap which covers the springs. Between these two extremes were many degrees of variation in the number and kind of springs used.

Long curled horsehair proved the best of upholstery stuffing. High quality moss came next, and palm fiber, coco fiber, tow and excelsior the cheapest and least satisfactory for stuffing. For cushions, down was rated first quality, then goose, duck, chicken and turkey feathers in the order named. Less desirable fillings we considered, were cotton and kapok.

New York State homemakers, in increasing numbers, are realizing that to buy the maximum of comfort, beauty and satisfaction when purchasing home furnishings, we must not only learn to appreciate beauty of line and color, but that we need accurate knowledge of construction processes and a discriminating taste in judging woods and fabrics of quality. Many find more lasting satisfactions when they exercise ingenuity and skill in using home made or made over furnishings until they can afford to purchase pieces of lasting worth. "A thing of beauty is a joy forever." Home furnishings must usually be used a long time and we can ill afford to buy hastily.

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